

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

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H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-15 EURE-00 SAM-01 IO-11 SAB-01 /093 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8282

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US, XF

SUBJECT: FINANCIAL TIMES ARTICLE ON USG-PLO CONTACTS

REF: (A) LONDON 763; (B) LONDON 863 (NOTAL)

1. IN FINANCIAL TIMES OF JANUARY 20, CORRESPONDENT DAVID BELL AGAIN TAKES UP HIS STORY ABOUT "SECRET CONTACTS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS" BETWEEN USG AND THE PLO. HE REPORTS SECSTATE AWARE OF NEED FOR "BREAKTHROUGH ON THE PALESTINE ISSUE," ADDING "IT HAS BECOME CLEAR OVER THE WEEKEND, HOWEVER, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS WORRIED THAT IT MAY BE SEEN TO BE MOVING TOO FAST ON THE ISSUE...THE STATE DEPARTMENT- DESPITE CAREFULLY WORDED DISCLAIMERS TO THE CONTRARY - HAS BEEN PUTTING OUT 'FEELERS' TO TRY TO GAUGE PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES IN ADVANCE OF ANY POSSIBLE SHIFT IN US POLICY."

2. BELL AGAIN REFERS TO THE "CONCILIATORY" SAUNDERS TESTIMONY AND NOTES DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN "LISTENING TO THOSE WHO TALK TO PLO. LESS DIRECTLY, IT HAS BEEN CONVEYING ITS OWN VIEWS BACK TO THE PLO THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES.

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ONE OF THESE IS PROFESSOR NORTON MEZVINSKY...HE SAID OVER

THE WEEKEND THAT HE HAS NEVER BEEN DIRECTLY AUTHORIZED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO TALK TO THE PLO BUT DECLINED TO COMMENT FURTHER ON SUGGESTIONS THAT HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ASKED INDIRECTLY TO CONVEY THE ADMINISTRATION'S THINKING."

3. BELL CONTINUES, "IT IS CLEAR THAT AT LEAST ONE OF THE EMISSARIES HAQ HAD TALKS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF THE QTATE DEPARTMENT WITH VERY SENIOR MIDDLE EAST SPECIALIQTs...POSSIBLY INCLUDING DR. KISSINGER" FOR TWO PURPOSES. FIRST IS TO TRY TO WORK OUT FORMULA "SO THAT EACH SIDE WILL KNOW WHAT THE OTHER WILL SAY IF IT MAKES SOME KIND OF PUBLIC CONCESSION DESIGNED TO GET TALKS UNDER WAY." SECOND HAS BEEN TO EXPLAIN TO PLO "THE CHANGE IN AMEPICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM." BELL BELIEVES SUCH A CHANGE HAS IN FACT BEEN TAKING PLACE UT STATES IN ORDER TO CONVINCE PLO OF THIS IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO USE "MEN LIKE PROF. MEZVINSKY" WHO ARE TRUSTED BY PLO. BELL STATES MEZVINSKY HAS AD-VOCATED PLO SENDING TEAM TO WASHINGTON. BELL CONCLUDES US ADMINISTRATION "IS NOW ENGAGED ON A MAJOR CHANGE BOTH IN ITS ATTITUDES AND ITS TACTICS TOWARDS THE PALESTINIANS.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ANSWER INQUIRIES ON THESE BELL STORIES.

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